

BILL PROVIDING MIXED JURIES GIVEN READING

Act Amended to Allow
Women to Be Listed
on Panels in Ontario

EXCEPTIONS CITED

Provision for mixed juries, as recommended by the Legislative Committee which last summer investigated the administration of justice in Ontario, is made in the Jurors Amendment Act, which was introduced yesterday in the Legislature by Attorney-General Conant.

Women who are excepted from jury service by the bill are "vowed members of a religious order living in a convent or other religious community, registered nurses and the wives (and conversely the husbands) of judges, magistrates, sheriffs, coroners, jailers, sheriffs officers and constables, barristers, solicitors and officers of the courts of justice."

The bill provides also that a judge may direct that in any civil case a jury shall be composed of men only, or of women only, and also permits a judge to "excuse a woman from jury service in any civil or criminal case by reason of the nature of the evidence."

A complementary bill, an amendment to the Voters List Act, provides for a new marking to indicate that a person is qualified to act as a juror. The old insignia was applied entirely to males.

Col. George Drew, Opposition Leader, in that connection suggested that when the Voters List Act is being amended, a clause should be inserted which would compel a voter to present his registration card at the poll.

"I know this has been done in some other jurisdictions. I do feel," he added, "that we should insist upon the production of registration cards because it is, in effect, a double check upon identity."

The suggestion would be taken under advisement, the Attorney-General indicated. A second clause to the jurors' bill makes absolute the rule that a grand jury may not inspect a public building within six months of a previous inspection. Under present law, a presiding judge may give a grand jury authority to make an inspection within the six months' limit.

A second bill affecting jurors, an amendment to the Jurors' Act by Ian Strachan, K.C., was given second reading. It removes nine classifications from exemption for jury service, including dental surgeons, school teachers, members of the militia and newspaper editors and reporters.

"The evidence before the administration of justice committee indicated a crying need for improving the jury system and of raising the qualifications for jurors," he said. "It is an inconvenience to serve on a jury, but it is a public service and only occurs once in a lifetime."